Suffolk County Department of Social Services

2013 Annual Report

Steven Bellone
County Executive

John F. O'Neill
Commissioner
Department of
Social Services

Message from the Commissioner:

I am pleased to present the Department's 2013 Annual Report which describes our Divisions and highlights our accomplishments during the 2013 calendar year.

I would like to remind the readers that the mission of the Department of Social Services is to provide financial assistance and support services to eligible Suffolk County residents in a cost effective and efficient manner, simultaneously protecting the vulnerable while encouraging their independence and self-sufficiency. This is a difficult balancing act for workers to accomplish which is why I would like to thank the Department's 1500 plus strong work force. Each of you collectively make this department capable of completing its mission daily by delivering the much needed services to the county's at risk programatically eligible residents.

In closing, the Department could not present this report without the support of the Suffolk County Executive, Steven Bellone, and the members of the Suffolk County Legislature. With the support of these elected officials the Department was able to expand access to our services to most vulnerable Suffolk county residents.

Thank you for taking the time to read our 2013 annual report and please feel free to visit us at our website at http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/SocialServices.aspx.

Client Benefits Administration (CBA) Division

What We Do

The purpose of Client Benefits Administration (CBA) is to provide financial assistance and service-related programs to programmatically eligible individuals and families through the following:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP);
- Temporary Assistance;
- Employment;
- Temporary Housing Assistance

Through these services and programs, clients are encouraged to become independent and self-supporting. Since cash assistance to recipients is now time limited, many transitional programs address employment barriers and transition recipients into self-sufficiency. CBA provides services to economically disadvantaged individuals, many of whom are medically and/or mentally impaired and face multiple barriers to economic independence. The CBA Division assisted over 150,000 applicants and recipients.

2013 Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Application Days to Disposition
The number of SNAP applications submitted to Suffolk County DSS increased 99%, from an average of 1,319 applications per month in 2008 to 2,519 applications per month in 2013. Despite this increase, the number of days to disposition for processing a SNAP application was reduced from an average of 31 days in 2008 to an average of 15 days in 2013, which is well within the federally mandated 30-day timeframe.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, provides a monthly benefit to supplement an individual's or family's food needs. The SNAP caseload has significantly increased over the last several years, due to the NYS Food Stamp Initiative reducing eligibility criteria and increasing outreach efforts, especially to those exhausting their Unemployment Benefits (i.e. the unemployed and those underemployed). The total SNAP caseload has increased approximately 9% from 56,278 in 2012 to 61,576 in 2013. To better illustrate the overall growth, the SNAP caseload has increased nearly 206% from 20,095 in 2007 to 61,576 in 2013. (Please refer to the chart on page 5.)

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) - The HEAP Program provides heating and domestic energy assistance to Temporary Assistance recipients, Food Stamp recipients, low-income families and the elderly. The program also allows for repair or replacement of essential heating equipment for homeowners. The current HEAP season opened on 11/18/13 and as of 12/31/13 CBA issued 19,306 regular HEAP benefits totaling $10,864,464.

Temporary Assistance - Temporary Assistance provides cash assistance or restricted payments to recipients for shelter, heating fuel, electricity and other basic needs. Temporary Assistance also provides emergency or diversion benefits to individuals who do not need ongoing assistance, but whose needs can be met through a one-time benefit. Through cost containment projects, CBA was able to reduce the Temporary Assistance caseloads about 7% from an average of 9,120 cases in 2012 to 8,517 cases in

2013. (Please refer to the chart on page 5.)

Employment Programs - The mission of the Client Benefits Employment Programs is to help clients who are applying for or receiving assistance become independent and self-sufficient. The primary objective of the Employment Programs is to ensure that fifty percent (50%) of TA/Safety Net recipients are employed, as per the participation rate requirement set down by the federal and state governments. During the first quarter of the Federal Fiscal Year 2013–2014, Suffolk County averaged a combined TANF/SN-MOE participation rate of 33.5%. This rate, when combined with the anticipated caseload reduction credit for Federal Fiscal Year 2012-2013, has allowed Suffolk to achieve the federally mandated participation rate of 50% thus far. Suffolk's participation rate was ranked 4th of the 58 districts during the 2013 calendar year.

Relocation of Disabled Client Assistance Program (DCAP) and Employability Units
The DSS Employment programs consist of the Compliance Unit, the Disabled Client Assistance Program (DCAP) and the Employability Unit. These three units work cooperatively with the Suffolk County Department of Labor (SCDOL). Previously, DCAP and Employability Units were located at the Mary Gordon Building, while SCDOL and the Compliance Unit were located in on Oser Avenue in Hauppauge. CBA has relocated DCAP and the Employability Unit to Oser Avenue in order to provide a continuity of all employment related services at one location.

Disabled Client Assistance Program (DCAP)
In 2013, the DCAP unit was able to successfully assist 254 SN singles, 3 SN families and 56 TANF families navigate the Social Security Administration application process to access their SSI benefits, which resulted in **a gross cost avoidance of $3.9 million.** In light of the local district's increased share of Safety Net Assistance from 50% to 71%, DCAP will continue to prioritize the SN caseload.

EAC Sanction Intervention Project
This project provides case management services for TANF/SN MOE individuals that are sanctioned. Those who are readily employable are provided assistance to deal with their barriers to employment. Those who are not employable are referred to EMP for further evaluation. This initiative supports the Department's ongoing efforts to re-engage non-compliant clients to keep them on the path of self-sufficiency.

As a result of these efforts, the Sanction Intervention Project has achieved the following results from January 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013:

- 3,136 sanctioned client cases were reviewed;
- 666 sanctioned were lifted for participating in employment;
- Only 235 cases were referred for closing;

The Safety Net Specialist Project
In light of the growing number of Safety Net cases, coupled with reduction in State reimbursement for these cases, Suffolk DSS implemented the Safety Net Specialist Project. As a result, the Safety Net (singles/childless couples) caseload decreased by 1,227 cases, from 4,656 in 2012 to 3,429 in December of 2013 representing a 26% decrease. The cost avoidance related to employment entries and enforcement of OTDA employment program requirements is estimated at **$1.1 million (gross/month)** and $773,000 (local share @ 71%/month).

Consolidation of Housing Division under CBA

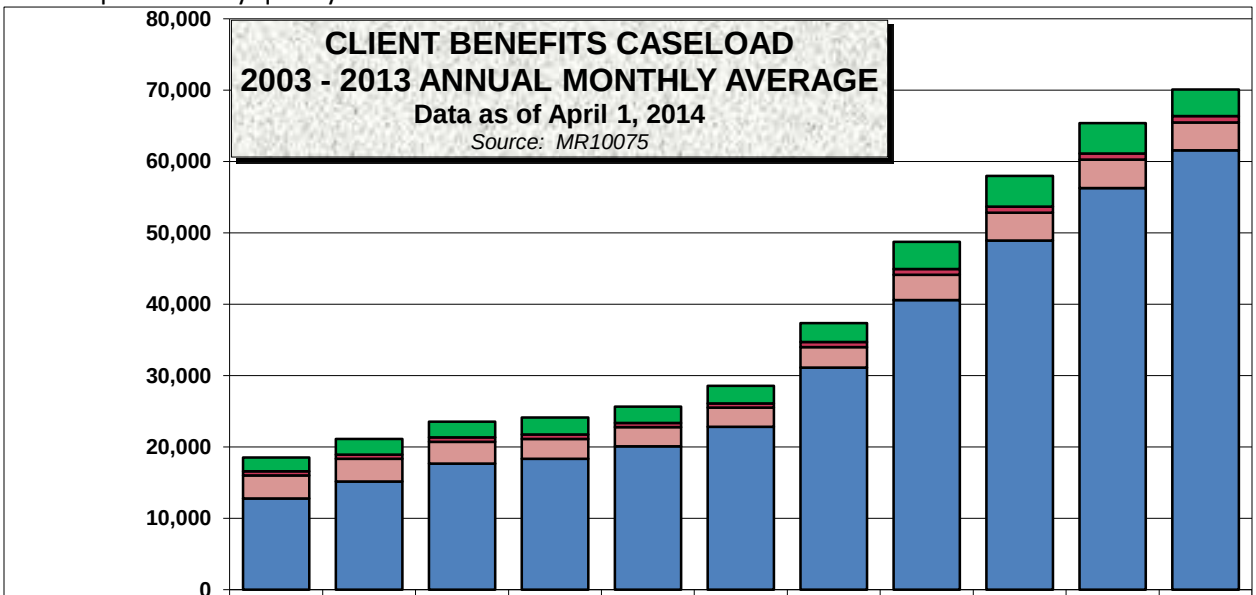
Effective 10/1/13, the Housing Division has been consolidated under the Client Benefits Division. Some of the initial benefits are:

- Staff cross training;
- Consolidation of Emergency Needs and Center Housing worker functions in order to place clients faster;
- Re-designed management structure which ***focuses on prevention and permanency*** versus placement;
- Increased Career Mobility for staff;
- During 2013 there were 238 permanent housing placements.

POET (Partnering for Operational Efficiency Team):

POET was developed to create management and program efficiencies within the operations of DSS. The Housing POET participants, ranging from Commissioner O'Neill to line staff, are currently reviewing and analyzing multiple business processes aimed at improving/streamlining Housing operations. The current subcommittees include the Housing Reports, Contracts, Housing packages and Inspections. Some of the initial improvements include:

- Reducing paperwork in the permanency package from 17 to 9 pages which will allow workers to process the same volume of work in half the time. This noticeable decrease in forms led to landlords contacting the Department concerned that the landlords did not receive the correct packages;
- Expediting the inspection process by utilizing the existing NYS building codes;
- Developing uniformity with regard to performance metrics for shelter providers;
- Establishing a housing resource staff member responsible for locating as well as inspecting residences thereby expediting the permanent housing placement process and arriving to permanency quickly.



	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	18,530	21,132	23,552	24,118	25,648	28,578	37,357	48,734	57,969	65,398	70,093
SN	1,949	2,214	2,226	2,366	2,315	2,484	2,675	3,794	4,282	4,262	3,720
SN-Fam	600	607	626	627	583	603	693	838	883	858	918
FA	3,224	3,174	3,033	2,814	2,655	2,656	2,892	3,503	3,874	4,000	3,880
NTA-FS & NTA-SSI	12,757	15,137	17,667	18,311	20,095	22,835	31,097	40,599	48,930	56,278	61,576

Family & Children Services Administration Division (FCSA)

What We Do

Through Family and Children's Services Administration (FCSA), the Department is responsible for the investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect and adult protective services. This division also provides foster care, adoptive services, and services for preserving, reuniting or rehabilitating families indicated for abuse or neglect. The division's Child Care Unit administers the county's child care program and authorizes child care subsidies for child protective families, public assistance families, and income eligible families according to eligibility guidelines. The FCSA Division served more than 40,000 Suffolk county residents in 2013.

2013 Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

Deploying 2nd Family Assessment Response (FAR) Team

In 2013, the Department met a long term goal this year of adding a second Family Assessment Response (FAR) Team to Family and Children's Services. FAR is New York State's alternative Child Protective response to certain child maltreatment reports. Unlike the traditional CPS investigative process, FAR is a non-investigative and intentionally family-centered and non-adversarial approach to CPS. FAR is completely voluntary and aims to provide protection to children by engaging families in an assessment of child safety, risk, and of family needs, in finding solutions to family problems and in identifying informal and formal support systems to meet their needs and increase their ability to care for their children. The FAR approach is solution-focused and is designed to connect families with the services they need and to prevent future involvement with the child welfare system.

Child Protective Investigations Intake

The intake of new reports of child abuse and neglect peaked in 2009 at 10,057 and has gradually declined by 9% through 2013 to 9,144. Year-to-year, intake has remained nearly the same from 2012 to 2013. Although Suffolk County, because of its large population, has the second highest intake of new reports of any district in New York State outside of New York City, the county has the fifth lowest rate of reports of child abuse/maltreatment as a percent of the total child population – 3.6% compared to the statewide average of 5.0%. (Please refer to the chart on page 8.)

Recurrence of Maltreatment

The recurrence of child maltreatment measures the rate of receiving a second substantiated report of child abuse and neglect within six months of a prior indication. Suffolk is doing a good job of alleviating child abuse and neglect as evidenced by the reduction in the recurrence from 17% in 2003 to the low of 8% in 2013. This is 3% below the statewide average of 11% and the lowest rate for Suffolk County on record. (Please refer to the chart on page 9.)

Child Protective/Preventative Services (CPPS)

The Child Protective/Preventive Services (CPPS) Bureau is responsible for the supervision of "indicated" cases of child abuse and neglect and providing services to alleviate and avoid a recurrence of maltreatment. Most cases are court ordered. The bureau also provides voluntary preventive services to families with children at risk of foster care placement. CPPS was responsible for serving 1,242 families with more than 2,700 children at the end of December 2013. This is down from a peak of 1,453 and 3,200 children in October 2011 and the lowest level since January 2009.

Workers in CPPS have worked diligently to decrease workloads whenever safe by requesting that the courts vacate orders that are no longer necessary, and allowing court order's to expire if all children are safe with a parent. This has been successful and the Family Court Judges for the most part have been supportive. (Please refer to the chart on page 10.)

Children in Foster Care

Children come into foster care for a variety of reasons including illness, death or incarceration of their parents, and as a result of neglectful or abusive family situations. The number of Suffolk County children in foster care reached a peak of 1,100 in 2002 and dropped by 43% to a low of 630 in August 2012. There were 725 children in foster care at the end of 2013. (Please refer to the chart on page 10.)

Increased Reunification

The preferred permanency goal for children discharged from foster care is the return to their parents, and Suffolk County continues to make significant progress in this area. During 2013, 68% of the 300 children discharged from foster care returned to their parents, an increase from 49% in 2012. Twenty-five percent of the foster children discharged were released to relatives, an increase from 19%. Many of the discharges made possible through the KinGap program, which is a New York State (NYS) Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) initiative that the Department is on board with.

Foster Care Contact Standards

In 2006, a federal standard was established requiring that every child in foster care must be seen once every calendar month by a caseworker. The minimum requirement for documenting successful casework contacts is 90%. For the federal fiscal year ending September 30, 2013**,** Suffolk County had a casework contact percentage of 93.2% exceeding the New York State average of 91.5%.

Adult Protective Services

Unlike Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services **are voluntary** and must meet three criteria:

- Client has a physical or mental impairment.
- Client in need of protection from actual or threatened harm due to inability to meet essential needs.
- There is no one available who is willing and able to assist the client responsibly.

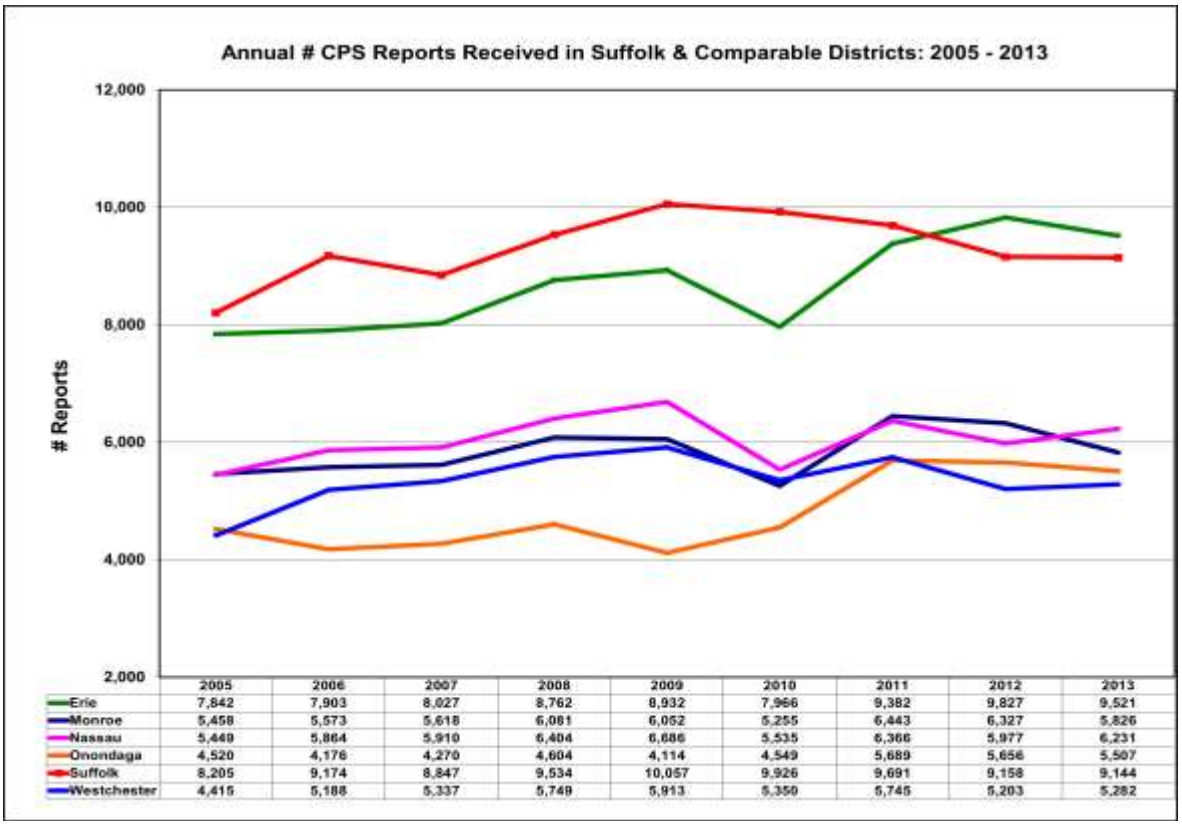
Adult Protective Services received 1,216 new Protective Services for Adults (PSA) referrals in 2013 – a decrease of 5% as compared to the 1,285 referrals received in 2012. (Please refer to the chart on page 11.)

Child Care Services

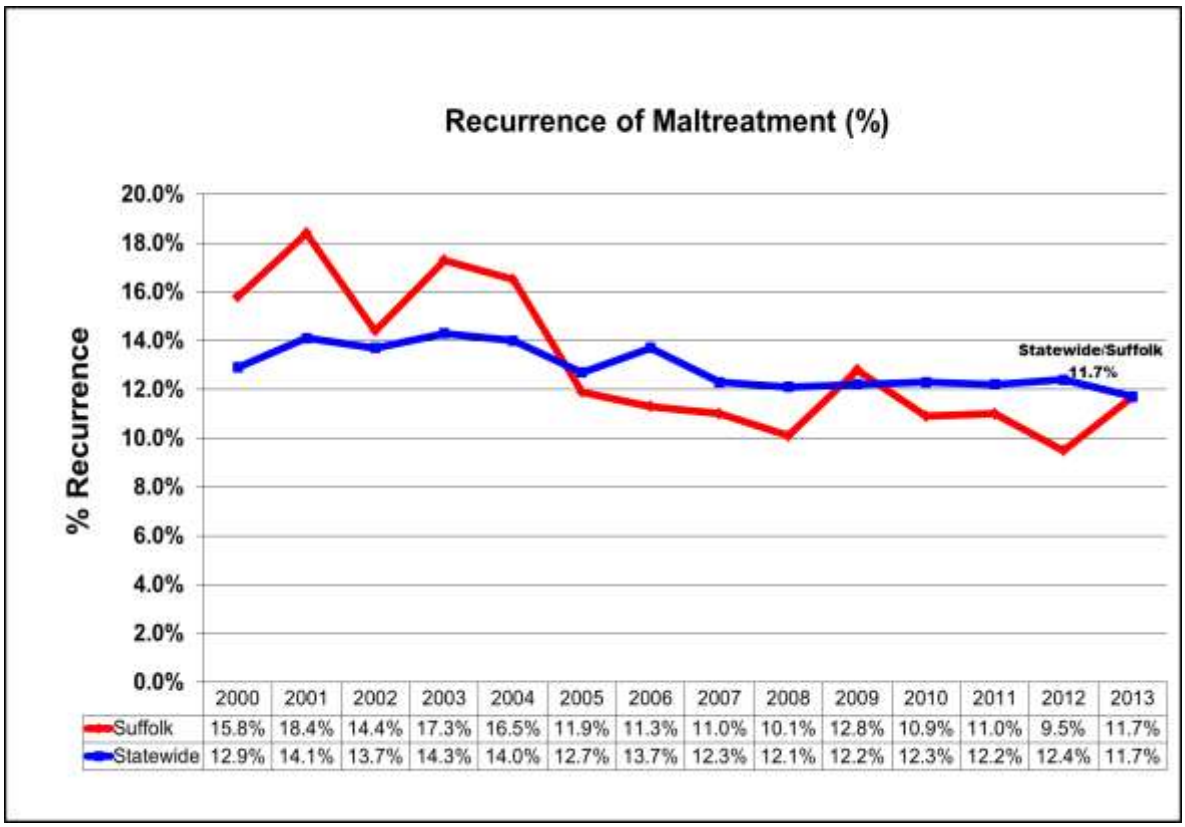
The Child Care Bureau was transferred from Client Benefits Administration to Family & Children's Services Administration, effective October 1, 2013. This transfer resulted in the consolidation of all child care services within a single Division to improve workload and staffing efficiencies, similar to the structure in place at OCFS.

More families are now receiving child care subsidies as Suffolk County increased the income eligibility standard from 100% to 125% of State Income Standard (SIS) in April 2013 and to 150% in July 2013. Nearly 4,800 children were authorized for child care subsidies in December 2013 compared to 3,600 in March 2013. The expenses of the children added that were between the 100% and 150% SIS are 100% reimbursed and this increase was the result of an increase in CCBG funds from NYS OCFS of almost one million dollars.

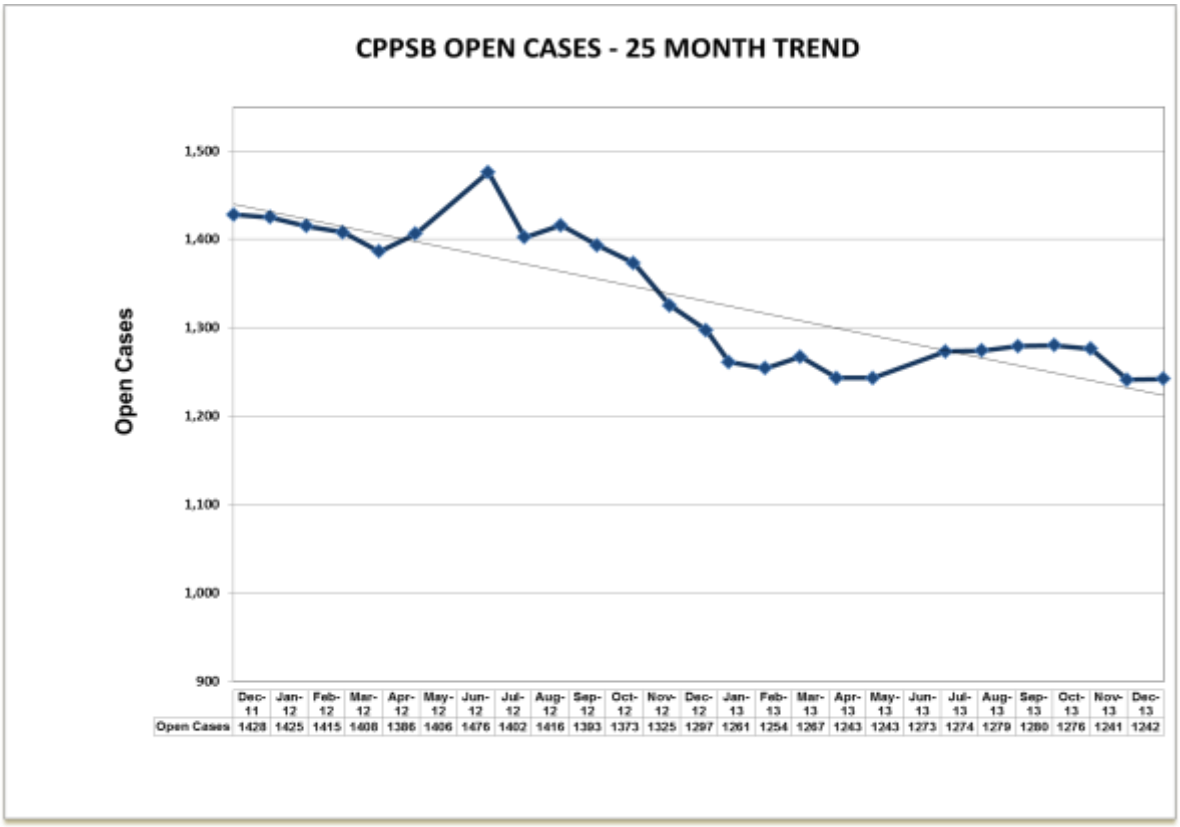
Social Services reduced the amount low-income parents have to pay out-of-pocket for child care coverage from 30% to 20% effective March 1, 2014. This will save low-income families an average of $500 to $600 a year with savings ranging anywhere from a few dollars a year up to nearly $2,800. The adjusted fees will allow working parents to keep a little more of their hard-earned monies in their pockets, which will allow for more food on the table, fuel for transportation and other daily necessities.



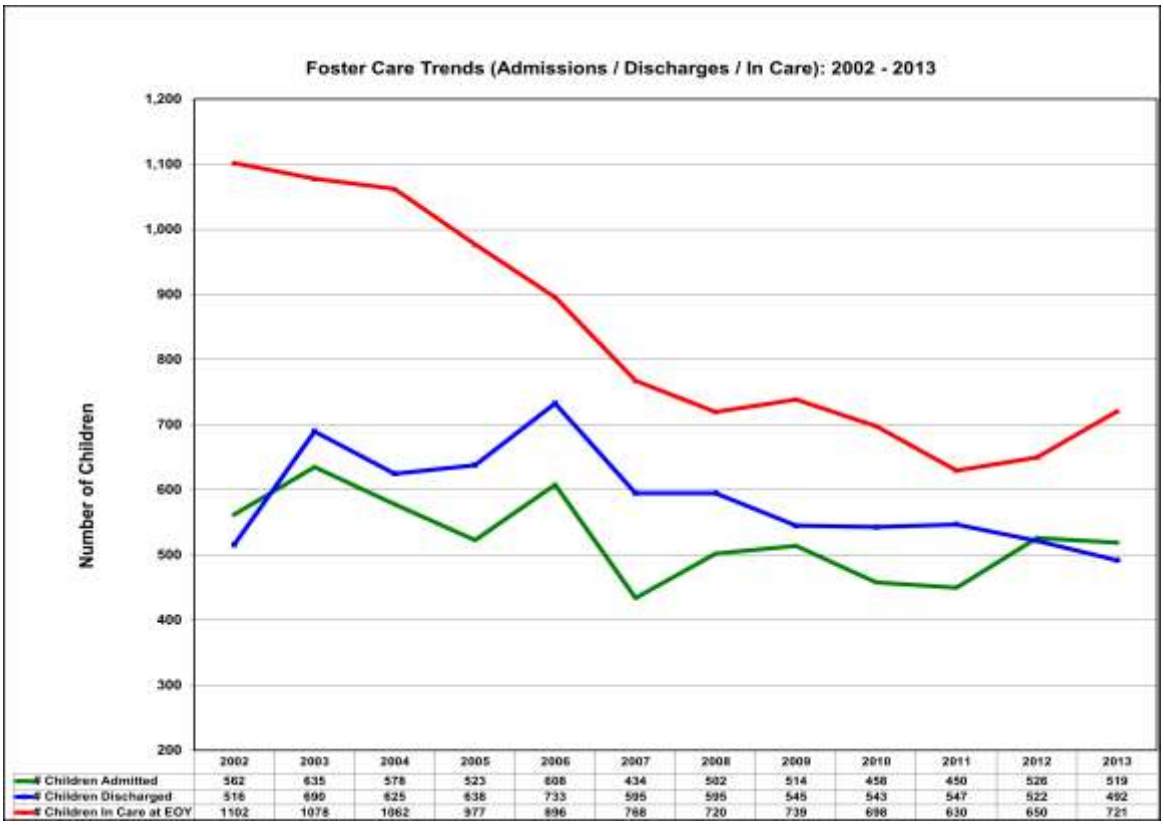
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Erie	7,842	7,903	8,027	8,762	8,932	7,966	9,382	9,827	9,521
Monroe	5,458	5,573	5,618	6,081	6,052	5,255	6,443	6,327	5,826
Nassau	5,449	5,864	5,910	6,404	6,686	5,535	6,366	5,977	6,231
Onondaga	4,520	4,176	4,270	4,604	4,114	4,549	5,689	5,656	5,507
Suffolk	8,205	9,174	8,847	9,534	10,057	9,926	9,691	9,158	9,144
Westchester	4,415	5,188	5,337	5,749	5,913	5,350	5,745	5,203	5,282

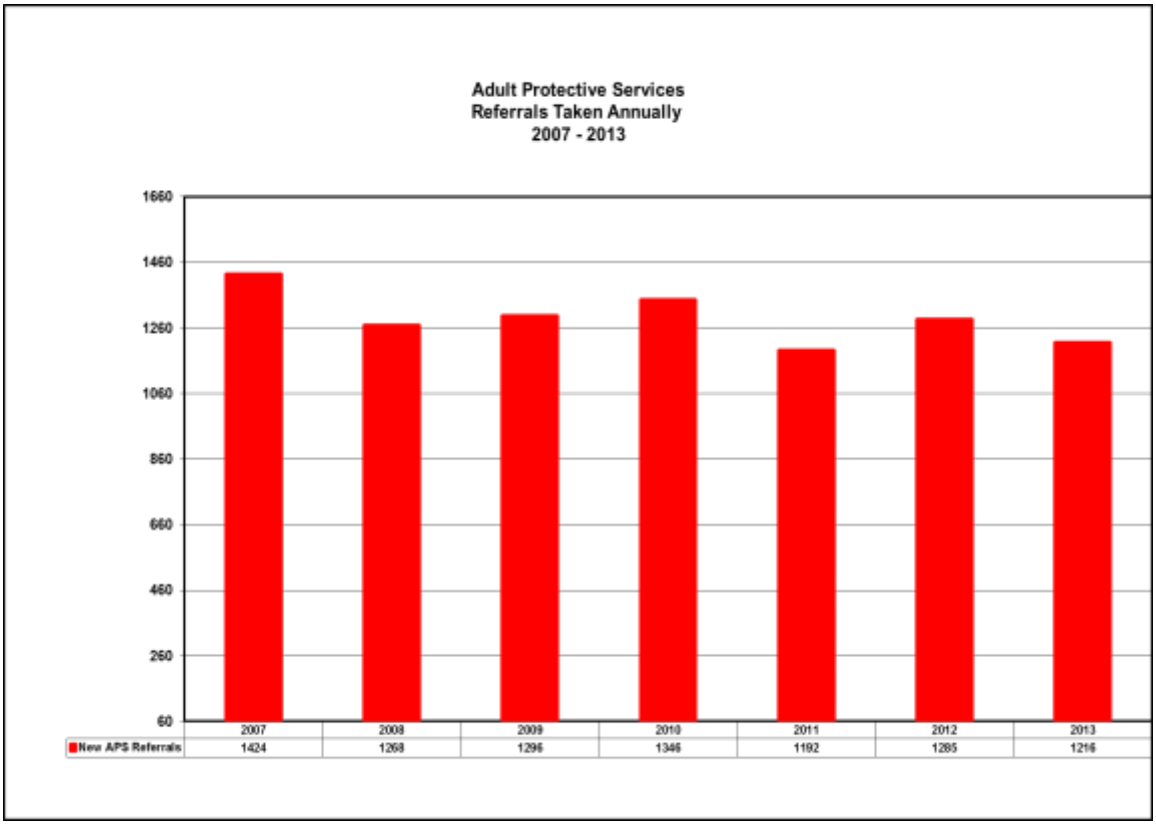


	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Suffolk	15.8%	18.4%	14.4%	17.3%	16.5%	11.9%	11.3%	11.0%	10.1%	12.8%	10.9%	11.0%	9.5%	11.7%
Statewide	12.9%	14.1%	13.7%	14.3%	14.0%	12.7%	13.7%	12.3%	12.1%	12.2%	12.3%	12.2%	12.4%	11.7%



	Dec-11	Jan-12	Feb-12	Mar-12	Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13	Dec-13
Open Cases	1428	1425	1415	1408	1386	1406	1476	1402	1416	1393	1373	1325	1297	1261	1254	1267	1243	1243	1273	1274	1279	1280	1276	1241	1242


Foster Care Trends (Admissions / Discharges / In Care): 2002 - 2013
Number of Children
1,200
1,100
1,000
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013
Children Admitted 562 635 578 523 608 434 502 514 458 450 526 519
Children Discharged 516 690 625 638 733 595 595 545 543 547 522 492
Children In Care at EOY 1102 1078 1062 977 896 788 720 739 698 630 650 721


Adult Protective Services
Referrals Taken Annually
2007 - 2013
1660
1460
1260
1060
860
660
460
260
60
2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013
New APS Referrals 1424 1268 1296 1346 1192 1285 1216

Medicaid Services Division

What we do

The purpose of the Medicaid Services Division is to determine applicants' eligibility for Medical Assistance programs and to ensure that all clients are provided benefits in a timely manner. To this end, the active Medicaid caseload increased by 7.5% from a yearly average of 120,224 cases in 2012 to 129,190 cases in 2013. This translates into one in seven Suffolk county residents participate in the Medicaid program. (Please see chart on page 12).

2013 Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

Chronic Care POET
The Chronic Care POET (Partnering for Operational Efficiency Team), which consists of various DSS division administrative personnel, joined with the Chronic Care Medicaid Unit to improve compliance and productivity goals of the Chronic Care Unit. The team has redesigned the workflow process, improved conformity among the supervisory staff and implemented specialized units within Chronic Care. With their hard work, perseverance and the initiatives above, Chronic Care's average processing timeframe decreased from 114 days in 2012 to an average of 48 days in the fourth quarter of 2013.

Centralized Scanning Unit
A Central Scanning Unit was formed in January 2013 in order to efficiently scan the client documentation into the electronic Medicaid case records. Initially this unit scanned MA documentation for the Smithtown MA, Chronic Care MA, Medical Services Bureau, and the MA Overages Units. In April 2013 the workload was expanded to assist Client Benefits Administration (CBA) and the Smithtown and Coram CBA Units.

Workflow Process Review Workgroup
A Community Undercare Process Review Workgroup was created on May 3, 2013, consisting of members from Eastern and Western Suffolk MA Undercare Units, and ended on November 7, 2013. This committee created a desk guide for use by new and experienced examiner staff as a reference guide and training tool. It emphasized conformity between centers, re-organized the undercare workload by having both renewal and maintenance functions handled by all examiners, and promoting increased renewal production.

Medicaid Compliance
Our Medicaid Compliance Unit has regularly been monitoring the compliance rate of Medicaid case processing timeframes, since the stipulation between the Empire Justice lawsuit and Suffolk County DSS was signed in 2009. As of November 2013 the Medicaid compliance rate is 98% and has been running between 98% and 99% throughout 2013. Also, the average community processing timeframe is 20 days in December 2013, as compared to a high of 46 days in 2009.

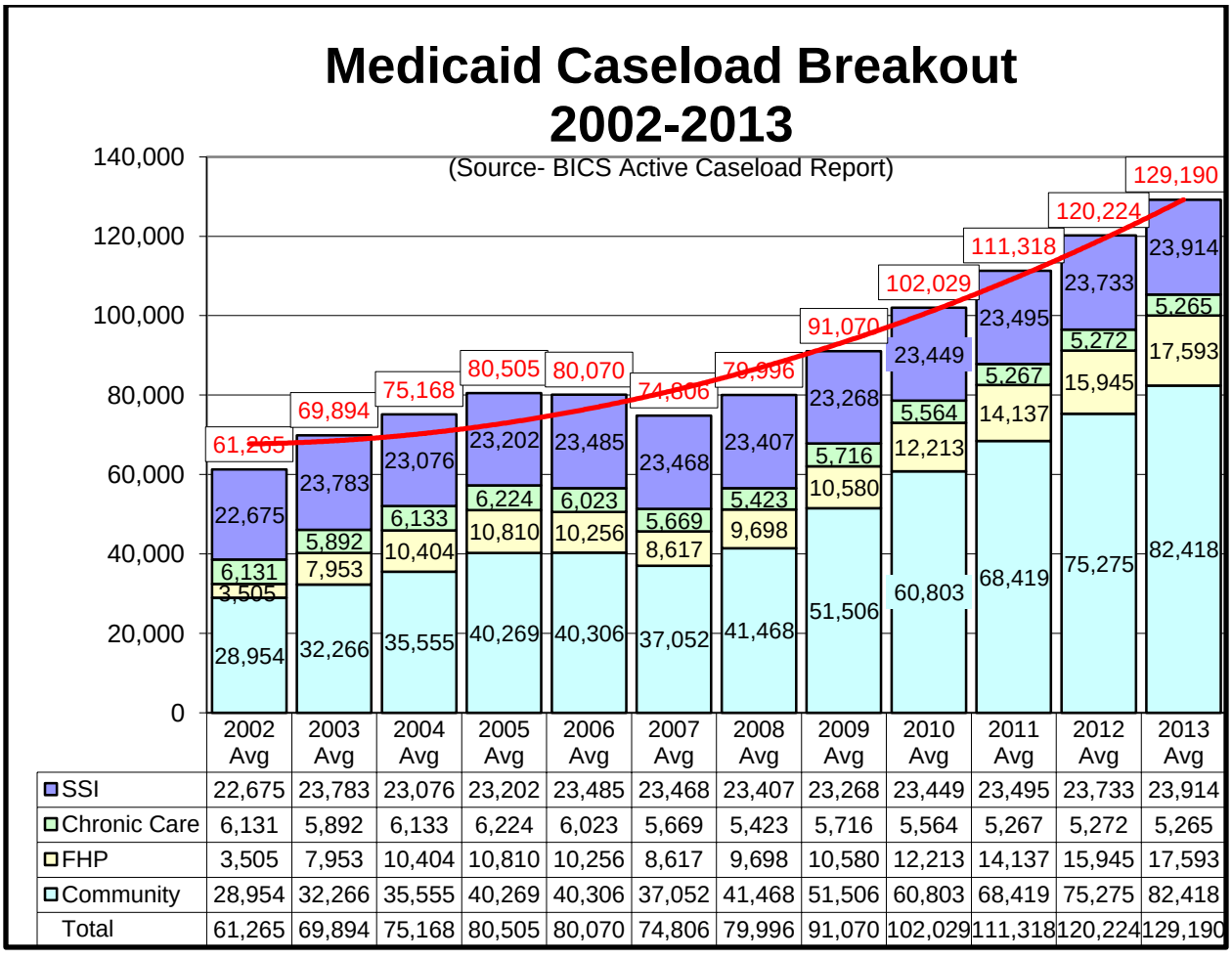
Uniform Assessment System
The Uniform Assessment System (UAS-NY) was required to be the statewide assessment tool to be used by our Medical Services Bureau (MSB) to assess Medicaid recipients requesting home care services. The training and transition period began on August 2, 2013, with implementation becoming mandatory on February 1, 2014. MSB staff has undergone rigorous training courses to learn the UAS-NY process and

have begun using this intricate and time-consuming system. They have worked with our Information Technology Division to guarantee that all laptop computers and Wi-Fi air cards are sufficiently capable of operating in the community.

Medicaid Redesign

As part of the NYS Medicaid Redesign, all dual eligible consumers (those having both Medicare and Medicaid) were voluntarily allowed to enroll in a Managed Long Term Care Plan beginning in January 2013. That enrollment became mandatory with cases beginning to transition monthly as of March 15, 2013. In addition, those adult dual eligibles in need of community-based long term care services for over 120 days, including the consumers in the Long Term Home Health Care Program (LTHHCP), were instructed to enroll in a managed long term care plan as of April 1, 2013, becoming mandatory on May 15, 2013. Non-dual eligible Medicaid recipients receiving LTHHCP services were mandated to enroll in a mainstream managed care plan. Our Medical Services Bureau played a key role during this transition to ensure that all consumers maintained their necessary services.

The New York State of Health (NYSOH), New York's health exchange marketplace, opened to the public on October 1, 2013 as part of the federal Affordable Care Act. As of that date, Suffolk County DSS began taking Medicaid referrals from the NYSOH for eligibility determination for non-MAGI applicants and all applicants requesting three month retroactive coverage, chronic care coverage, community-based long term care and waivered services, income spenddowns, and the MBI-WPD program.



Child Support Enforcement Bureau (CSEB) Division

What We Do

The purpose of the Child Support Enforcement Bureau is to ensure that custodial parents of children in the County receive child support owed to them by their child's non-custodial parent.

Collections
In 2013, Suffolk County's Child Support Enforcement Program efforts resulted in the collection of $155,765,637. This is the thirteenth consecutive year that CSEB has collected over $100 million dollars. Child Support collections have continued to rise each year over the same time period, and total collections for 2013 reflected a 1.9% increase over total collections for fiscal year 2012. (See chart on page 14.)

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

Most Improved Performance in Large Counties 2012
In 2013, Suffolk County CSEB was the recipient of an award from New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for having the most improved performance for large counties in all areas of support collection and enforcement. CSEB continues to develop projects and initiatives that will allow us to improve performance in the areas of Paternity Establishment, Support Establishment and Support Collection. As of December 2013, Suffolk's performance measures for Paternity Establishment and Support Establishment increased to 89.22% and 86.95% respectively, over December 2012 at 86.00% and 85.30%.

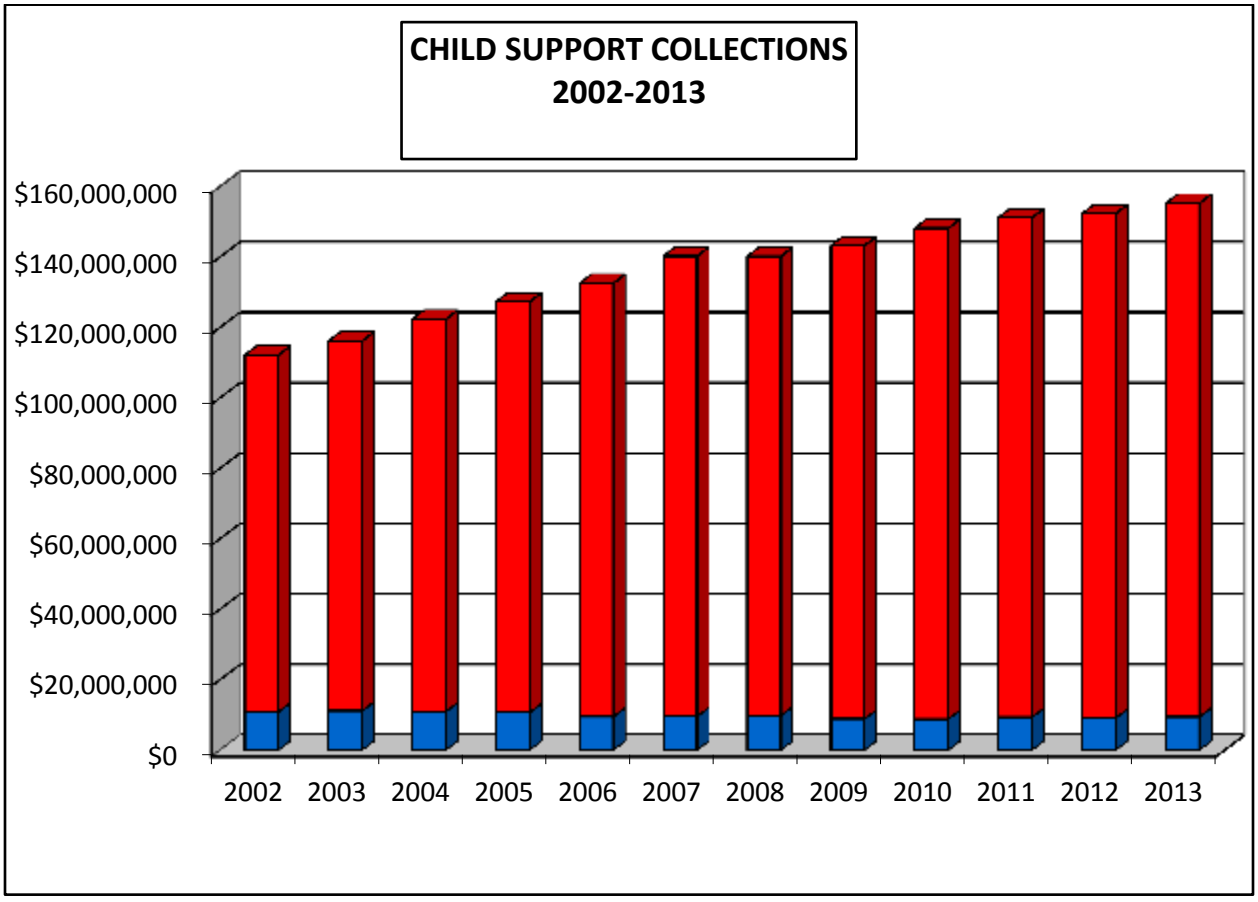
Savings and Cost Avoidance
There are major savings/cost avoidance facets of child support collections. Child support payments collected on behalf of custodial parents receiving temporary assistance are used to reduce TA costs. The funds collected by CSEB have a major impact upon Suffolk County's ability to reduce TANF expenditures. Forty three percent (43%) of the court-ordered caseload have been, or currently are, TANF recipients. In addition, the child support payments CSEB collects directly impact the custodial parent's ability to discontinue TA. In 2013, 453 TANF clients receiving child support payments became self-sufficient and no longer needed assistance.

Child Support Collections via Incarceration Purge Payments at Family Court and County Jail
In a collaborative effort with the County Attorney, Family Court and Suffolk County Sheriff, CSEB has been successful in collection support payments at Court and jail to purge incarceration orders. Through November 2013, 121 respondents were sentenced to up to six months in jail, and 88 made support payments totaling $227,270 to purge incarceration.

Challenges

Obtaining Court Ordered Medical Support Orders
The Federal and State Offices of Child Support imposed the requirement that every case must have a court order addressing medical insurance for the dependent children. This requirement was imposed retroactively to the entire caseload. Caseload review efforts are continuing, with court petitions

resulting in appropriate cases; as of November 2013, 24,827 cases had medical insurance orders in place.



Information Technology Division

What We Do

The purpose of the Information Technology Division is to ensure that the Department is running in the most efficient manner possible while using technology to create operational efficiencies via automation.

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

NYS Imaging & Electronic Document Repository and Onsite Scanning Project
Suffolk discontinued offsite scanning services and now performs all scanning of permanent and case processing documents onsite. This will eliminate the costs associated with the offsite model, in the form of NYS chargebacks, which totaled $1,202,881 over 2-1/2 year period from January 2009 through June 2011 or about **$481,108 annually in cost savings**.

Improved Productivity and Efficiency through Technology
Workflow processes reviews were performed seeking possible improvements in productivity, efficiency and security. The following projects were identified and implemented:

- Print release function (private and hold printing options) to reduce paper waste and improve adherence to privacy standards.
- Availability of desktop faxing functionality on 41 network copiers; train staff on the use of this functionality in pilot units with roll out to all compatible devices in 2014.
- In order to eliminate waste and reduce paper costs, BICS continues to work with programmatic divisions to eliminate need for printed reports by providing the report in electronic format. This is provided either on the TREAT system (system generated) or through the reports dashboard (ad hoc queries).
- Wireless Laptop Access for 15 Medicaid Nursing field staff to improve security while increasing productivity and efficiency. An additional 24 wireless air cards were provided to FCSA caseworkers for access to information from the field; 150 air cards are now deployed.
- Creation of Cross Domain Resources which provide shared network availability of County and Department templates, information, policies and procedures.
- End User Technology training program developed to provide information on available technological solutions and network resources for improved efficiency. This presentation also covers Security, Privacy, Suffolk County Computer Use Policy, Archive rules, Profile Management and Best Practices.

FCSA Scanning of Unfounded Cases
Pursuant to local law, the IT Division maintains the Family and Children's Services scanning operation for retention of unfounded Child Protective cases under the guidelines of NYS Elisa's Law. The archived data from the jukebox, a high-capacity archive storage environment for imaging repositories, was moved onto hard drives which is more reliable and data is now immediately available for staff to retrieve documents and images. This is more efficient and has resulted in **cost avoidance of $3,161** annual maintenance.

WMS Jobs (DoIT)
DOIT's intention to decommission its mainframe equipment required the migration and conversion of all DSS mainframe jobs. Reports previously compiled and distributed by DoIT were created to now be produced in-house.

Sunset of Windows XP Operating System & Equipment Refresh
On April 8, 2014, Microsoft will end support of Windows XP operating system, at which time any device running that operating system will be considered a vulnerability to the network and cannot be attached as a domain resource. Therefore, 1,440 devices on DSS Domain were upgraded or replaced in 2013. 427 devices on the New York State HSEN Domain were completed, with 288 to be completed in the first quarter of 2014.

Through the execution of an MOU with New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Suffolk took delivery of 449 desktop computers to replace outdated equipment unable to support newer technologies. The equipment refresh also supports the following objectives:

- Timely and accurate case processing (Temporary Assistance, SNAP, HEAP) through increased worker utilization of NYS applications: myWorkspace, Imaging/Enterprise Document Repository and the Welfare to Work Caseload Management System;
- Increase worker productivity by modernizing hardware assets;
- Increase worker utilization of web-based paperless systems; and
- Improve performance of web-based systems with modern hardware.

Execution of this MOU resulted in **a onetime cost savings of $277,482**.

A&R Migration to Maestro (HMS)
As part of the NYS Medicaid Redesign project, NYS OMIG created a centralized and standardized process for the Estate and Casualty Recovery Programs. Suffolk's transition to this centralized system required the entry of its data into the case management system, Maestro. Suffolk development staff coordinated the migration of legacy data to the new system to minimize the work effort required with manual entry of this information, migrating 1,393 AR cases with 428 estate and 1,358 negligence records.

Housing Operations Databases
Concurrent with a detailed process flow review and directed by the POET Housing Operations Project, functional requirements were development to improve the design and use of the current systems which manage the Department's housing operations. The new functionality is designed to increase efficiency, eliminate the need for faxing referrals, and provide "real time" information on clients in the emergency housing system.

During 2013, many improvements were made to the database functionality which supports the Emergency Placement, Inspections and Housing Operations processes. These automated processes will replace the current manual systems in use.

- Facility Management module provides the ability to record room types and room amounts available on a daily basis.
- Center workers input placement referrals from clients at centers. The Central placement unit completes each placement referral from the center by assigning a facility, based on availability and room amounts, which are managed throughout the day in a real time database.

- Provide the ability to manage facility availability (current day), placements and client attendance, and the ability to closeout previous day's overnight placements in bulk.
- Integration of data from both the Central Housing Unit during the day and Emergency Services overnight to improve the daily handoff each morning.
- The Emergency Housing Database is available to users in other Divisions within the Department to check on the status of their clients, reducing the need for faxing or calling for information.
- Additional fields were added to track pertinent information and access was provided to users in multiple divisions across 6 locations. Improved communications were noted between the Central Housing Unit, Emergency Services and Center Based staff.
- The collection of attendance information and bed availability from shelter providers is required to begin the daily placement activities/processes. In order to streamline this manual process, IT developed a web portal for online reporting of this information by shelter providers. Pilot testing began on December 16, 2013 and roll out to all shelter providers is planned for the 1st quarter of 2014.
- Development of automated reports to measure key performance metrics such as; the Daily Placement Census; as well as Length of Stay and Permanency reports for benchmarking effectiveness of provider services toward client permanency.
- Added functionality to identify, at the case level, when a case includes a person with a "special need" which is now highly visible on case screen.
- Added functionality to mark a case for priority / special handling (Flag, exclamation mark, etc.) and/or alert staff to a case requiring priority / special handling. This alert/mark is now visible on the Case and Placement screens.
- Added ability to print the Placement screen and the Facility Availability screens, and save the info on these screens into an EXCEL file. Thereby, decreasing the need for paper and eliminating some manual steps in the process.

Annual Work Order Statistics & Trends:

	TOTAL
Help Desk Work Orders:	**24,908**
Applications/Software:	**20,481**
Hardware:	**3,570**
Network	**857**

Personnel & Support Services Division Overview

What We Do

The Personnel and Supportive Services Division is comprised of the following units: Human Resources, Facilities Management, Special Investigations and Security. Administrative support is provided allowing the other divisions to focus on their core mission.

How We Do It

Facilities
The Facilities Management Unit manages the daily needs and long-term planning for all eight DSS buildings. This includes maintaining existing space, anticipating changes, determining space allocation, and scheduling building repairs. Projects include the renovation of existing space to accommodate the needs of personnel and to increase workflow efficiency and productivity.

Security
It is the responsibility of the Security Unit to oversee and ensure the safety of all staff, clients, and visitors of DSS facilities. They are prepared to assist with emergency situations and document incidents accurately. Security Guards also answer general questions from clients, direct them client to appropriate line they should stand in and what forms need to be filled out. Security assists several hundred clients each day.

Special Investigations Unit
The Special Investigations Unit's (SIU) primary function is to ensure that the expenditure of public funds is limited to those who are legally entitled to receive these benefits. Through a variety of fraud prevention programs and State mandates, SIU takes measures to prevent, detect, and investigate fraud. This unit is an effective force in uncovering, prosecuting and deterring welfare fraud in Suffolk County. By uncovering fraud of unreported assets, income, household composition, dual assistance, fraudulent vendor billing, misuse of funds, and the filing of false applications, the Unit's Investigators save taxpayer dollars. In cases involving fraud, SIU will identify any overpayments and take recovery measures.

2013 Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

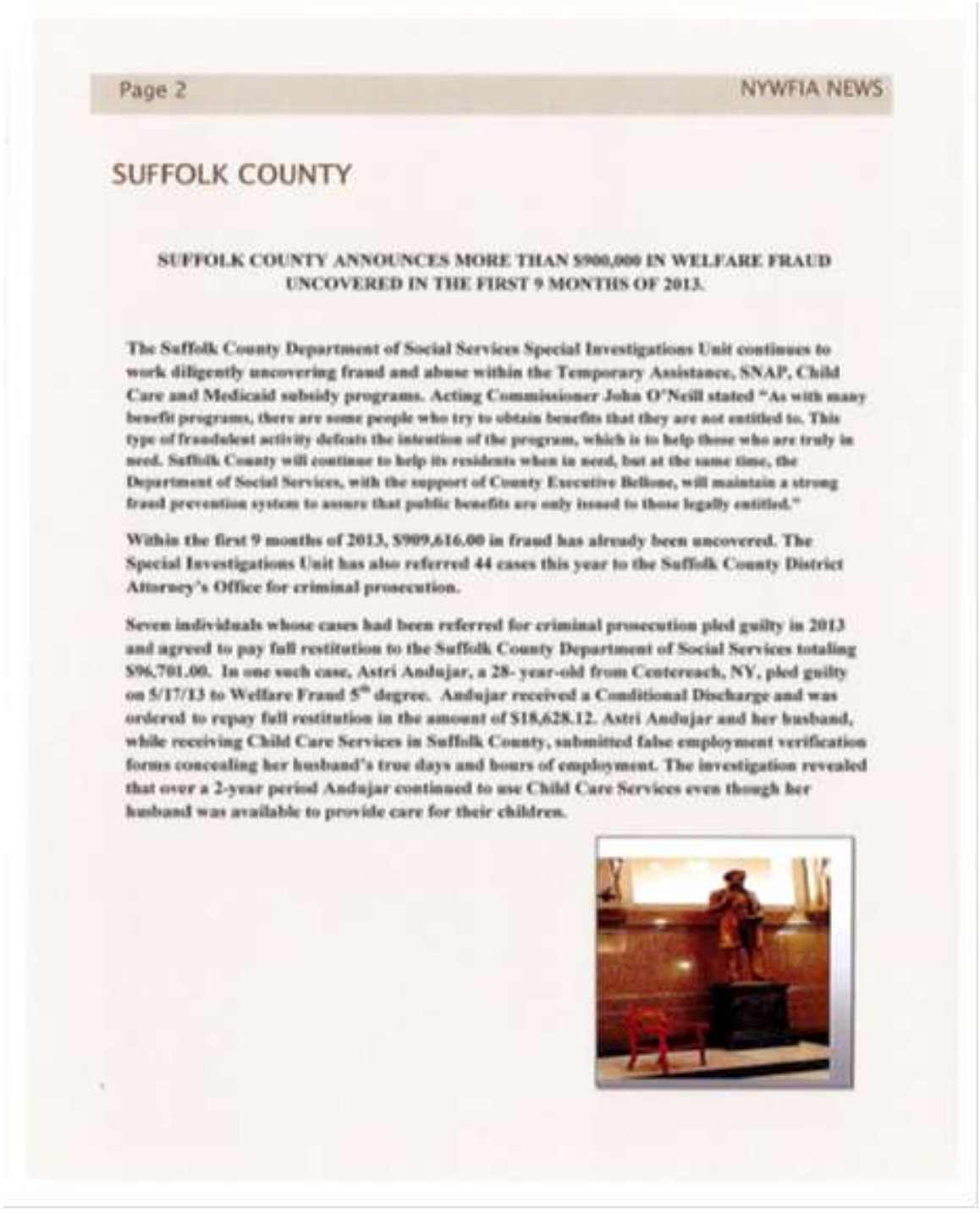
Special Investigations

- In 2013 the SIU unit completed 4964 investigations (including PARIS MATCHES) and 2062 FEDS/CC-FEDS cases.
- The unit uncovered a total of $1,171,666.
- FEDS investigations realized a total of **$13,129,937 in Cost Avoidance Savings**.
- 57 cases were referred to the District Attorney's Office for criminal action – these cases totaled $701,634.
- SIU Collections resulted in $200,144 in **actual cash** repayments – this amounts to 17% of all fraud uncovered in 2013.

DSS has received, to date a total of $200,144 in cash restitution. These monies represent reimbursement from individuals who are repaying signed Confession of Judgments, have paid direct restitution and/or have made payments resulting from Restitution Judgment Orders resulting from

criminal prosecution. This amounts to approximately 17% cash reimbursement of the total fraud uncovered in 2013.

SIU has referred 57 cases to the District Attorney's Office for criminal action in 2013. The majority of these cases have involved Child Care and/or SNAP Fraud findings. These 57 cases represent $701,634.00 of the total fraud uncovered in 2013. The SIU team's diligent efforts and results were mentioned in the New York Welfare Fraud Investigators Association (NYWFIA) newsletter. Please see article below:



Page 2 NYWFIA NEWS

SUFFOLK COUNTY

SUFFOLK COUNTY ANNOUNCES MORE THAN $900,000 IN WELFARE FRAUD UNCOVERED IN THE FIRST 9 MONTHS OF 2013.

The Suffolk County Department of Social Services Special Investigations Unit continues to work diligently uncovering fraud and abuse within the Temporary Assistance, SNAP, Child Care and Medicaid subsidy programs. Acting Commissioner John O'Neill stated "As with many benefit programs, there are some people who try to obtain benefits that they are not entitled to. This type of fraudulent activity defeats the intention of the program, which is to help those who are truly in need. Suffolk County will continue to help its residents when in need, but at the same time, the Department of Social Services, with the support of County Executive Bellone, will maintain a strong fraud prevention system to assure that public benefits are only issued to those legally entitled."

Within the first 9 months of 2013, $909,616.00 in fraud has already been uncovered. The Special Investigations Unit has also referred 44 cases this year to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office for criminal prosecution.

Seven individuals whose cases had been referred for criminal prosecution pled guilty in 2013 and agreed to pay full restitution to the Suffolk County Department of Social Services totaling $96,701.00. In one such case, Astri Andujar, a 28- year-old from Centereach, NY, pled guilty on 5/17/13 to Welfare Fraud 5th degree. Andujar received a Conditional Discharge and was ordered to repay full restitution in the amount of $18,628.12. Astri Andujar and her husband, while receiving Child Care Services in Suffolk County, submitted false employment verification forms concealing her husband's true days and hours of employment. The investigation revealed that over a 2-year period Andujar continued to use Child Care Services even though her husband was available to provide care for their children.

Human Resources

The Department honored the following employees as **Employee of the Month in 2013**:

Month	Name	Division / Unit
January	Maureen Peterson	FCSA / CPS
February	Lynda Basilius	CSEB / Non FA Enforcement
March	Jeanette M. Gettling	FCSA/ CPS
April	Emam S. Saba	Finance / Accounting
May	Ingrid J. Garcia	CSEB / Interstate Enforcement
June	Cynthia Naso	FCSA/ Child Care
July	Linda O'Donohoe	Administration
August	Fara R. Mata	CBA / Eligibility
September	Pamela Rausch	IT / Data Entry
October	Lisa Hayes	MA / Eligibility
November	Kerri L. Kogut	CBA / HEAP
December	Janine Marcelino	CBA / Eligibility

Finance Division Overview

What We Do

Finance consists of three areas, Administration, Revenue, and Expenditures. The Administration unit is in charge of all the areas within Finance and performs many Department wide and interdivisional functions. In addition, Finance Administration is responsive to the fiscal concerns of the program divisions.

The Revenue area consist of three key units; Assets and Resources, Claims and Collections. A&R Unit's function is to identify and secure claims. The Federal & State Aid Claims Unit must continuously adapt to a changing fiscal environment relating to both Suffolk County and New York State revised fiscal systems and financial reporting requirements. The Collections Unit is responsible for collecting refunds and recoveries, as well as for maintaining the accounts receivable subsidiary system for landlord security deposits and other debts.

The Expenditure area consists of the accounts payable units. Complying with Federal State and Local Laws to issue payments for the many program areas within the Department is complex.
In addition, the Unit also provides fiscal information and documentation to various Departments within the County. The Unit provides the Department's Special Investigations Unit with payment authorization documentation to assist in fraud investigations.

How We Do It

Revenue

- The Assets & Resources Unit is responsible for securing and collecting claims on a client's interest in real or personal property, or from proceeds of a lawsuit for injuries. Staff also identify and evaluate the client's assets and resources to reduce or eliminate the need for assistance. The Unit also handles the review and billing for burial assistance.
- The Federal and State Aid Claims staff processes a monthly reimbursement claim that encompasses the majority of all Social Services program and administrative costs. In addition, individual reimbursement claims are processed for the Home Energy Assistance Program, State Charge, Employment Program, Independent Living Program, and the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program. This unit prepared and filed federal and state aid claims in excess of $250 million during 2013.
- The Collections Unit's responsibilities include collecting all debts owed to the Department by vendors and clients, receiving and processing all non-debt miscellaneous revenue, such as client Medicaid Overage payments, fingerprinting fees, subpoena fees, etc.

Expenditure

The Expenditure Unit's, also known as the Accounting Unit, priority is the timely and accurate processing of client, vendor, provider and child care provider payments. During the last year, the unit managed to remain successful despite limiting resources. However, the unit has successfully complied with the local prompt payment laws. The Divisions adherence to this law is of the utmost importance to the Commissioner and the Department as a whole.

The Unit's responsibilities are diverse. In addition to the Services and TA Payment Sections, the Unit is also responsible for the Purchasing areas and the Accounts Payable areas. These areas are responsible for all administrative payments for the Department. In addition, The Purchasing Section is responsible for processing the purchases of all supplies, equipment and services for the Department. This section monitors administrative expenditures and transfers funds between accounts as necessary. The Unit works with the Purchasing Department to resolve problems and insure the timely issuance of purchase orders.

2013 Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

Administration

The Administration component of the Finance unit oversaw the Departments $638.5 million adopted budget for 2013 and is directly responsible for coordinating the Department's Operating and Capital Budget Requests. The Suffolk County Budget Review Office mentioned that the "*budgeting process for all DSS program and chargeback lines has become noticeably tighter*" in their Review of the 2014 Recommended Operating Budget document.

Revenue

The Revenue unit brought in an excess of $300 million in revenue. The Division aggressively went after recoupments and money owed from vendors through both our internal collection process as well as using an outside collection agency. In addition to timely filing, claims with the State to secure both State and Federal dollars owed to Suffolk County.

Expenditure

The Accounting unit processed over 180,000 vouchers, processed over 334,000 checks and reduced the processing time of payments. The processing days for childcare went from an average of 28 days in January 2013 to an average of 14 days in December 2013. All other not for profit vendors are being paid on average within 20 days; remaining in compliance with prompt payment local laws.

Summary

The Suffolk County Department of Social Services is faced with many different and competing priorities regularly. For example, effectively providing services in a humanistic manner, having to meet State and Federal mandates, and the sluggish rebounding economy which fuel increasing caseloads; the Department does not see relief in sight in the immediate future.

While 2013 was quite the productive year for the Department, I hope 2014 is equally, if not more, fruitful. We, the public servants, have a duty to the tax payers to deliver our services more efficienciently through technological advancements and positive change in order to allow our staff to be more proactive thereby saving the tax payers monies.

This is why one of the Department's foremost objectives for 2014 is to provide the much needed services to the county's most vulnerable, but in a more efficient cost effective manner. The Department will review its current business operations to determine how each Division can improve its workflow processes so the process is less manual in nature and more automated. Thereby, allowing the DSS staff to deliver services to eligible Suffolk County residents in a timelier manner. Furthermore, this will provide relief to DSS Staff who are dealing with the impact of caseloads from a slow recovering economy.

In closing, again I thank all of the employees of the Department of Social Services for their hard work, and the Suffolk County Executive and Legislators for their continued support. I thank you for taking the time to read our 2013 annual report and please feel free to visit us at our website at http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/SocialServices.aspx.